**The Mirabal Sisters:**

**Las Mariposas / The Butterflies**

***http://www.colonialzone-dr.com/people\_history-mirabal\_sisters.html***

***"What matters is the quality of a person. What someone is inside themselves " --* Maria Teresa Mirabal**

[](http://www.colonialzone-dr.com/images/Mirabal_hermanas.jpg)

**Patricia, Maria Teresa and Minerva Mirabal**

Original Images Owned by the Mirabal Family

**Los Hermanas Mirabals/ The Mirabal Sisters**. Four Dominican women from Salcedo (as of Nov. 2007 the province is officially named Hermanas Mirabal), Dominican Republic. These women followed their convictions with bravery and selflessness to fight for what they believed. To fight against a dictator’s rule they felt was wrong. Three of them - Patria, Minerva, and Maria Teresa - gave their lives for their cause. They were killed savagely by some henchmen following the Dictator [Rafael Leónidas Trujillo](http://www.colonialzone-dr.com/people_history-Trujillo.html) orders. The four sisters and the group they were involved in were a threat to this commanding dictator. They were involved with trying to over throw his cruel, ruthless and fascist government.

The families first real run in with Trujillo was at a party to which they were invited. The family left early. Trujillo was angry about this so he had the father, Don Enrique arrested (no one was permitted to leave a party before Trujillo). Minerva and Doña Chea were also arrested the following day. Every day Minerva was taken to the [Fortaleza Ozama](http://www.colonialzone-dr.com/sights1.html#sights1-fortelaza_ozama) and interrogated by two of Trujillo's men. She refused to write a letter of apology to Trujillo. Since the family was well connected, they knew the right people. They got Trujillo’s brother, with whom they were acquainted, to intercede for them and have the family members that were imprisoned released. They were again arrested a few years later and were always in fear of Trujillo’s men. This constant fear and stress led to Don Enrique, the girl’s father, to his death on December 14, 1953.

The group the Mirabal sisters helped form that fought against the Trujillo regimen was known as al Movimiento 14 de junio/ The Movement of the Fourteenth of June. The sisters were known as Las Mariposas/ The Butterflies. On November 25, 1960 Trujillo decided he had enough of the sisters trouble making and decided it was time to get rid of them. He sent his men to intercept the three women on their return home from visiting their husbands who Trujillo had incarcerated. He had these men imprisoned in hopes that it would make the ladies shut up and stop their activities, which it did not. The sisters’ car was stopped. They were led into a sugarcane field. Here they were mercilessly beaten and strangled to death. Then their car was taken to a mountain known as La Cumbre, between Santiago and Puerto Plata, and thrown off.

Trujillo thought he was finally free of "the problem". But what happened was just the opposite of what he had hoped. The plan failed. The people of Dominican Republic, along with the Catholic church, were outraged. These ladies lives were cut short because of their convictions. Trujillo, with this action, brought more attention to the rebellion. Instead of eliminating the over throw of his dictatorship he brought its downfall. This contributed to his assassination in 1961, only six months later.





*A 200 pesos oro, a Dominican Bill of Currency dedicated to Las Hermanas Mirabal*

*A 10 cent Dominican Republic stamp from 1985 to commemorate the death of the Hermanas Mirabal*

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**Patria Mercedes** (the eldest sister, was born on February 27, 1924). She was leaning towards being a nun when she met and married Pedro Gonzalez (they had 4 children).

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**Minerva Argentina** (the second sister, was born on March 12, 1926) is the one that initially got involved with the underground movement to overthrow the government. While she was away at school she found that she had friends whose families had been tortured by Trujillo’s men. With this her eyes were opened. She was always a bit of a rebel and hated when someone or something was wronged. Minerva went to University in Santo Domingo (which at that time was called Ciudad Trujillo) and was granted the right to study to become a lawyer. She did complete her studies to become a lawyer, the first woman accepted to study this profession, but she was denied the right to practice law and was never granted her diploma.

She had a keen interest in politics which is what led her to meet the leader of the Popular Socialist Party and start her fight for freedom of the country. This was the perfect cause for her. She married Manolo (Manuel Tavarez and had 2 children), who was also anti-Trujillo.



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**Maria Teresa (Maté)** (the youngest sister, was born on October 15,1936) was seeing Leandro Guzmán (they had 1 child) who was also involved in the anti-Trujillo movement. They worked together for the over throw of Trujillo's government.



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**Dedé**, her given name is Bélgica, was born February 29, 1925 (her

birth was filed on March 1st so this is her legal birthday). She is

the sister that was not with the rest of the sisters on that tragic day. She has since dedicated her life to preserving her sisters’ memory. She has 9 children, one of which is Jaime David Fernandez Mirabal. He served as the vice-president during Leonel Fernández's first term as president between the years of 1996 and 2000.



**The Mirabal Museo/ Museum** is Dedés way to maintain the

memory of her 3 sisters. She greets many of the visitors to the

museum personally. This museum is located in the second home

of the Mirabal family in Conuco, Hermanas Mirabal (Salcedo).

The grounds are immaculately kept. There are butterflies displayed throughout the grounds. It is a beautiful garden and so tranquil.

  

*Butterfly display Museum Gardens*

There are displays of much of the family's personal effects. Included in the collection is María Teresa's embroidery and Patria's teacup collection. In each of the girls rooms are many of their personal items, handkerchiefs, their sewing machines and each of their favorite dresses.







*Personal effects of the Mirabal Sisters*

The most powerful items in the collection are the artifacts of the sisters' murder: the shoes, handbags, and papers, as well as the long braid of hair which Dedé cut from María Teresa's head in the morgue. There is also a blood stained handkerchief that came from the murder scene. Located on the property is also a library, bookstore, and souvenir shop.

 

*The Mirabal Museum Mirabal Museum Garden*

**On November 25, 2000** (the fortieth anniversary of the Mirabal sisters' assassination) the remains of the sisters were moved to the gravesite on the museum grounds. Here the three sisters are buried together along with Manolo, Minerva's husband.



*grave site*

**The original Mirabal home** is still located close to the museum in Ojo de Auga. Here the surviving sister, DeDé still lives. The gardens are beautiful and they grow cacao on the farm.

 

*The Original Mirabal Home Mirabal Home Garden*

**In the park across the street** from the home is a unique monument that represents 3 butterflies. You can also see the chassis of the jeep from which the ladies took their fateful ride. There is damage to both the front and rear of the vehicle because of the staged crash.

 

*Monument to Mirabal Sisters Chassis from their Jeep*

**The Park Ecoparque de la Paz/ Peace Ecopark** dedicated to the Mirabal sisters is a few feet across the street and down the road from the home. Funding for this beautiful park is provided by the Fundación Hermanas Mirabal. The organization is chaired by Bélgica Mirabal (DeDé) her son Jaime David Mirabal and Minú Tavarez Mirabal. The park has three paths representing the three sisters who died. The park was designed by architects Michelle de la Cruz, Paloma Hernández y Oliver Guillén. It is a beautiful monument to these 3 patriotic ladies and their living sister who remembers them with such grace and love.



*Peace Eco Park*

**The International Day Against Violence Towards Women** was accepted on December 1999. At the 54th session of the United Nations General Assembly was adopted Resolution 54/134. This resolution declared November 25th the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. This day was chosen because on November 25th, 1960 is when the three Mirabal sisters, Patria, Minerva, and Maria Teresa, from Dominican Republic were violently assassinated for their political activism. The sisters, known as the "Unforgettable Butterflies," became a symbol of the crisis of violence against women in Latin America. This date was chosen to commemorate their lives and promote global recognition of gender violence, and has been observed in Latin America since the 1980s.



*Mirabal Sisters Monument*